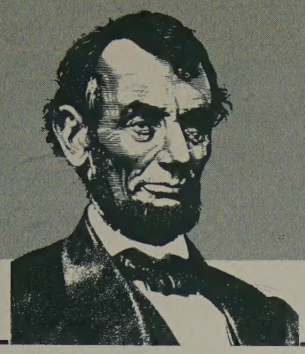

# Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor
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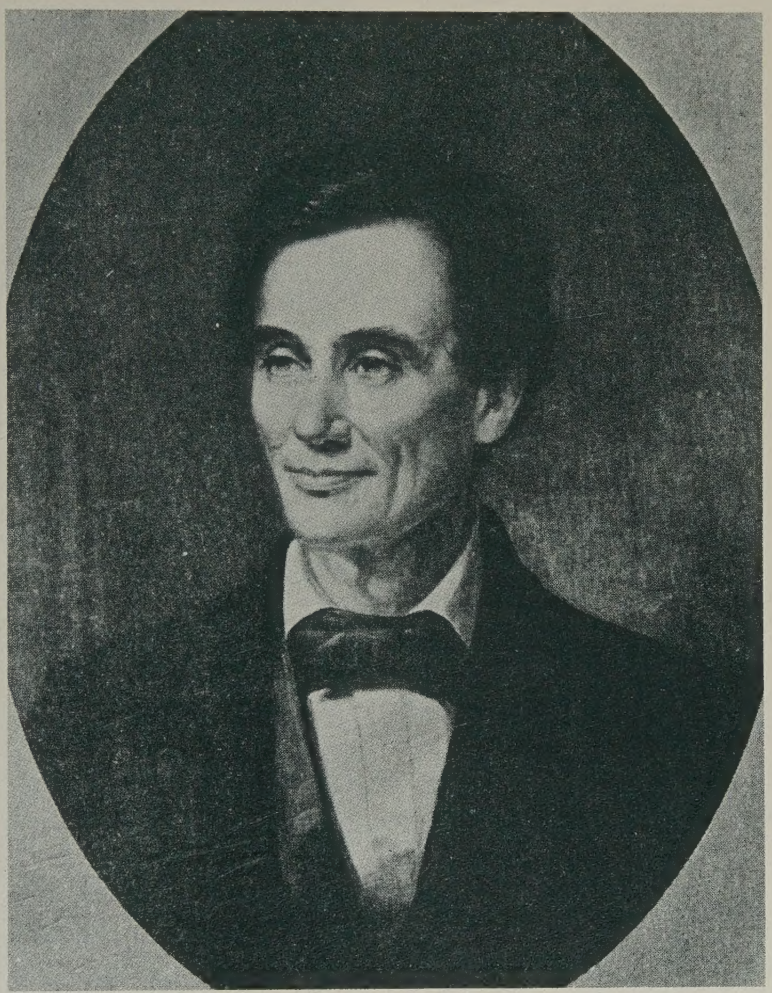
## ALBAN JASPER CONANT'S "SMILING LINCOLN"

William M. McPherson a patron of the arts commissioned (probably paid expenses) Alban Jasper Conant to paint Abraham Lincoln's portrait. McPherson, who became the first president of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, lived in Saint Louis, Missouri, and being a strong Unionist, he was not unmindful of the campaign value of a new Lincoln portrait from life for his home city. Saint Louis was to stage the Agricultural and Mechanical Association Fair in October 1860 and it was thought most appropriate for the Western Academy of Art to sponsor a portrait of the Republican presidential candidate.

Conant, the thirty-nine year old secretary of the Academy of Art, went to Illinois. Arriving in Springfield about two months before the November election armed with letters of introduction, (he had studied art for a period of one year in New York City) Conant first contacted Lincoln in his office in the State House. He found Lincoln quite busy and surrounded by many friends. Lincoln read the letters of introduction and was about to refuse Conant's request for sittings when another young artist in Lincoln's office said: "Mr. Lincoln, you can give him my sitting for tomorrow. My stay in Springfield is unlimited, and I can arrange for sittings later to suit your convenience. I shall be glad to further this gentleman's work in that way." This obliging young artist was George Frederick Wright of Connecticut.

The hour appointed for the first sitting was ten o'clock the next morning. The studio was Lincoln's office, a room about sixty feet long by about twenty feet wide. When Conant arrived the presidential candidate was sitting at a large table on which was stacked "a bushel of letters."



**Portrait of Lincoln painted by Alban Jasper Conant**

Lincoln looked anything but merry and Conant had determined to paint a smiling Lincoln. The artist had seen Lincoln the day before talking to his friends. Then his face had no expression of weariness and the lines had softened into curves. This first glimpse Conant had of Lincoln gave him the vision he wished to transfer to canvass.

To get an animated expression on Lincoln's face Conant brought up Lincoln's debates with Stephen A. Douglas as a topic of conversation to draw Lincoln out and to help him forget the pressing correspondence that had to be answered. At other sittings the artist discussed numerous topics and Lincoln in turn would start talking — relating anecdotes and jokes that produced the desired animation on his face. Years later (1893) Conant contributed to a sort of "album" *Liber Scriptorium* "a reminiscent but not unique section" called "my acquaintance with Abraham Lincoln." Here he related the details of his conversations with Lincoln and introduced some of the stories and legends that are so well known today. In 1911 Conant wrote a second account of the circumstances under which he painted his first portrait of Lincoln which appears in part in Rufus Rockwell Wilson's work "Lincoln in Portraiture."

Conant provided his readers with an interesting description of Lincoln's physical characteristics: "I was much puzzled to decide what view of his face was most desirable for my purpose. His features were irregular and angular—the line of the nose was straight on one side and slightly curved on the other; the lower lip on the right side was fuller than on the left, as if swollen from a blow or the sting of an insect; while the lines of the lower part of his face met in sharp angles on each side of his mouth. Above

all, the heavy mass of black hair, which was quite long, stood out from his head in a very obstinate way, except where it fell over his forehead, which I discovered was very beautiful and symmetrical. I would add also that when his features were in perfect repose his expression was sad and thoughtful. This was intensified by the drooping of the under lid, showing the white of the eye below the iris."

Early in the second week of Conant's visit to Springfield he announced the completion of his portrait. Making preparations to leave "Mr. Lincoln came over, and, looking at the portrait, said: 'You are not going till this evening? I would like Mrs. Lincoln to see that. If you will let it remain here I will bring her at three o'clock.'" Mrs. Lincoln arrived promptly with her son "little Tad" and his playmate called "Jim." Jesse K. Du Bois and O. M. Hatch also came to view the portrait. When it was unveiled Mrs. Lincoln said, "That is excellent, that is the way he looks when he has his friends about him. I hope he will look like that after the first of November.'" "Meanwhile Tad "charged around the room like a young colt." He looked into everything—his mother capturing him now and then and holding him in check. Discovering an unfinished portrait (by George Frederick Wright) Tad said to Jim, "here is another Old Abe!" The guests appeared not to notice Tad's remark but Lincoln laughed heartily saying, "Did you hear that Conant? He got that on the street, I suppose."

Before Conant left for Saint Louis he called at the Lincoln home, accompanied by his little daughter whom he had brought to Springfield for company at the hotel. Upon telling them good-bye Lincoln inquired if the girl's mother were living. Conant answered in the affirmative and Lincoln said, "I am glad to know it! Somehow I had got the idea that she was an orphan, and I was afraid to ask about her mother for fear I might hurt her feelings."

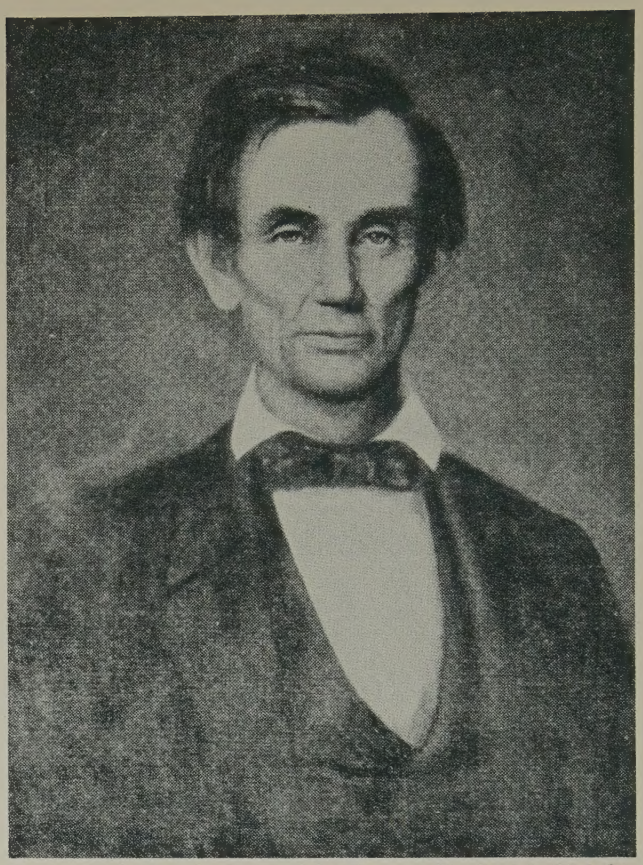
It was Conant's wish that the citizens of Saint Louis would honor him with a commission to paint a full length portrait of Abraham Lincoln. As this did not materialize Conant sold the "smiling Lincoln" to his good friend Colonel James Eads on February 11, 1868. Today the portrait hangs in the Phillipse Manor House at Yonkers, New York, a gift from the late Alexander Cochran Smith of that city. Mr. Smith is said to have paid $3,750. for the study.

Conant died on February 3, 1915 at the age of ninety-four years. One authority has stated that "during the course of his long life he painted, either single-handed or with the aid of fellow artists, as many portraits of Lincoln as did Gilbert Stuart of Washington in an earlier time." However, of all the portraits which Conant painted—and these include Edwin M. Stanton, Henry Ward Beecher, Dr. James McCash (president of Princeton), Major Robert Anderson of Fort Sumter fame and a host of justices of the Supreme Court—that of the "smiling Lincoln" painted in 1860 remained the most celebrated.

## "THE BUTLER PORTRAIT" BY GEORGE FREDERICK WRIGHT

George Frederick Wright of Connecticut was one of fifteen or twenty artists who went to Springfield, Illinois in the summer and fall of 1860 to paint Abraham Lincoln's portrait. Unlike many other painters who gathered in Springfield, Wright had a fine academic background both in the classical and art fields of study. He studied at the New York National Academy and was in the life class under Daniel Huntington. At the age of twenty-one (born in 1828—some authorities say 1830) he held the position of custodian of the Hartford Wadsworth Athenaeum Gallery, and in that city he painted very acceptably for five years. He next spent two years abroad—in Germany under Professor Albert Grafle, court-painter of Baden, and a summer in Rome. Returning to the United States he painted in several southern and western cities, but principally in Hartford.

In the late summer of 1860 Wright went to Springfield, Illinois, where he received from the State of Illinois



**Portrait of Lincoln painted by George Frederick Wright.**

a commission to paint the portraits of thirteen former governors. Wright made numerous friends in Springfield, among them Jacob Bunn who was later chairman of the Board of State House Commissioners. Later on he spent considerable time in Belleville, Illinois, where he met the daughter of the exiled Italian nobleman, Count Murrazelli di Monto Pescali. In 1866 he married Marca Arelia Murrazelli.

While painting the former governors of Illinois, Wright secured appointments for sittings for his first portrait of Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln was so beseiged with artists that he sized up the situation and laid down some rules. He could recognize no favorites, and to show his fairness he told the artists that he would open his mail about nine o'clock each morning at his headquarters in the State House, and that they would be welcome to line up around the room with their easels and paint simultaneously whatever they could for a period of twenty or thirty minutes every day. It was in this room that Lincoln delivered his famous "House Divided" Speech on June 16, 1858. He was in 1860 fifty-one years of age, clean shaven, with a face unwrinkled as yet by presidential cares.

At the end of the period, when his office had been transformed into a studio, and after a great many of the portraits were finished, Lincoln asked William Butler, who had acted as one of his campaign managers, to express his opinion and judgment as to which of the portraits was the best likeness of himself. Butler was one of Lincoln's particular friends and political advisers and was elected State Treasurer of Illinois in the same election that elevated Lincoln to the presidency. This was the same William Butler at whose home Lincoln had boarded for more than five years after his arrival in Springfield.

Acting on Lincoln's request Butler and his wife and their three children, Salome E. Butler, Speed Butler and Henry Wirt Butler, visited the legislative hall to view the portraits with the idea of selecting the one which was the best likeness of Mr. Lincoln. After viewing all

the portraits that were exhibited, the family was in agreement in the selection of the Wright portrait. A day or two later, Butler informed Lincoln of the family's opinion, whereupon the future president brought the portrait from Wright and presented it to his friend.

The picture became known as the "Butler portrait" and it remained in the possession of the family for many years. At the death of William Butler, the heirloom passed on to his daughter Salome and was by her, a short time prior to her death, given to William J. Butler, a son of Henry Wirt Butler. For many years the portrait was exhibited in the National State Bank in Springfield, Illinois.

Next Edward W. Payne became the owner and when his estate was being settled (he died February 19, 1932) the portrait was ordered to be sold by the sheriff to be applied on judgments against the Payne estate. Probate Judge Benjamin De Boice thereupon restored the painting to the custody of the Springfield Marine Bank and directed that the banking institution seek possible purchasers. As Lincoln's fame grew so did the value of the portrait. Lincoln authorities praised its historical accuracy and boldly declared it was worth $100,000. At this time (1934) it was rumored that J. P. Morgan had offered a large sum for the portrait. Its fame was further enhanced by its exhibition at the Century of Progress in the Illinois Host Building. Eventually the portrait found permanent ownership at the University of Chicago and it now hangs in the Lincoln Room in Harper Hall.

Wright painted two other portraits of Lincoln both of which are bearded. One of these portraits from life was commissioned by General Horatio G. Wright (painted in Washington, D. C. in 1864) and was purchased by William Randolph Hearst. It was later sold to the Kleeman Galleries and is now in the possession of the University of Chicago and hangs in the Harper Room.

The other portrait is described as an allegorical painting (see Rufus Rockwell Wilson: *Lincoln In Portraiture*, page 249-250). For many years it was owned by Mrs. James Campbell of Mystic, Connecticut, whose father purchased the original from Wright. Mrs. Campbell sold the portrait in 1904 to John Stanton Palmer. For a time it hung in the Public Library at Westerly, Rhode Island. Later the portrait was acquired by the late Percy Rockefeller and is now the property of the estate. A reproduction of this painting appeared in *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. 53, February 13, 1909.

In addition to the painting of the Lincoln portraits and the thirteen governors of Illinois, Wright did the portraits of twenty governors of Connecticut. He also painted a portrait of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln, and Dr. Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, founder of the American School for the Deaf.

Wright died in 1881 and his wife, an artist of unusual talent, lived until 1919. She was a teacher of painting and languages in Hartford. In her long life of eighty-two years she became acquainted with many of the leading characters of the Civil War period. She could remember having heard John Brown discuss his anti-slavery plans with her slavery-hating father. By chance she was a temporary resident of Minnesota in 1862 and was residing at Stillwater at the time of the Sioux Massacre led by Chief Little Crow.

## Some Additional Facts Pertaining To The Thomas Hicks Portrait of "The Youthful Lincoln"

(See Lincoln Lore, No. 1471, September, 1960)

On November 24, 1940 the Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., 30 East 57th Street, New York, N. Y., sold the Lincoln portrait by Hicks to Kennedy & Co., Art Dealers, 785 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y., for $11,100. From newspaper clippings in the Foundation files it appears that Kennedy & Co., purchased the Hicks portrait for Bernon S. Prentice who owned a collection of American and English paintings.

Parke-Bernet Galleries again offered the portrait for sale on April 19,1952. According to the *New York Herald Tribune*, April 20, 1952 the "First Lincoln Portrait" was purchased by the late Oscar B. Cintas, a former Cuban ambassador to the Uniter States. Mr. Cintas wanted the portrait as a companion item to the Bliss copy of the Gettysburg Address which be bought for $54,000 after spirited bidding in the same gallery on April 27, 1949. While Mr. Cintas was present at the sale of the Gettysburg Address in 1949, he telephoned from Havana a bid of $18,000 for the Hicks portrait. This was the successful bid as the second highest bidder offered $17,500. It is of interest to point out that at this same sale, during the same session one of Gilbert Stuart's portraits of George Washington sold for $12,000.

On October 5, 1953, in Havana, Cuba, Oscar B. Cintas made a will by which he bequeathed the Hicks portrait of Lincoln to the Chicago Historical Society "as a sign of admiration and respect for its secretary, Paul M. Angle." At the same time he bequeathed his holograph copy of the Gettysburg Address to the United States to be placed on exhibition in the White House." Since the death of Mr. Cintas, his estate has been in litigation, complicated by another will made in New York on April 30, 1957. However, in 1959 the Surrogate Court of New York awarded the Hicks portrait to the Chicago Historical Society and the Gettysburg Address to the United States under the terms of the 1953 will.

## A Presidential Wager Great Pedestrian Feat

"During the last presidential campaign Mr. Edward P. Weston made a wager to the effect that if Abraham Lincoln was elected by the people president of the United States, he would agree to walk from Boston to Washington inside of ten consecutive days, and be present at the inauguration. He will leave the State House, Boston, at noon today, and will be accompanied by two friends, who ride in a carriage a short distance behind him to succor him in case of necessity, and also to see that he carries out his agreement to the letter. He expects to arrive at Washington at 4 p.m. March 3d—the whole time occupied in walking from Boston to Washington to be two hundred and eight hours."

The (Baltimore) *Sun*
February 22, 1861

## An English Opinion Of Mr. Lincoln's Second Inaugural

"The London Spectator remarks of president Lincoln's Inaugural Address that 'for political weight; moral dignity and uneffected solemnity it has had no equal in our time.' After quoting from the language of the address, it adds; 'No statesman ever uttered words stamped at once with the seal of so deep a wisdom and so true a simplicity. The village attorney of whom Sir. G. C. Lewis and many other wise men wrote with so much scorn in 1861, seems destined to be one of those foolish things of the old world which are destined to confound the wise, one of those weak things which shall confound the things which are mighty.' "

Fort Wayne, (Ind.) *Daily Gazette*
April 15, 1865

# CUMULATIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY—1959

Selections approved by a Bibliography Committee consisting of the following members: Arnold Gates, 289 New Hyde Park Road, Garden City, N. Y.; Carl Haverlin, 2 Masterson Road, Bronxville, N. Y.; E. B. Long, 708 North Kenliworth Ave., Oak Park, Ill.; Richard F. Lufkin, 45 Milk Street Boston, 9 Mass.; Wayne C. Temple, Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tenn.; Ralph G. Newman, 18 East Chestnut Street, Chicago 11, Ill.; William H. Townsend, 310 First National Bank Bldg., Lexington 3, Ky.; and Clyde C. Walton, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, Ill.

New items available for consideration may be sent to the above addresses or to the Lincoln National Life Foundation.

Editor's Note: United States Information Service items are not available for distribution in the United States and requests for publications listed are not obtainable in Washington, D. C. or posts aboard.

## —BURMESE—

**STONE, IRVING** **1959-225**
Love is Eternal/by Irving Stone./Volume One./ Shumawa Printing Dept;/No. 1 Sandwith Roard, Rangoon.
Book, flexible boards, (206) pp., 4⅞" x 6⅞", n. i. Printed in the Burmese language.

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Love is Eternal/by Irving Stone./Volume Two./ Shumawa Printing Dept;/No. 1 Sandwith Road, Rangoon.
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## INDIAN
## —BENGALI—

**NORTH, STERLING** **1959-228**
Bengali translation of Abe Lincoln: Log Cabin to White House/by Sterling North. Original edition in English published by/Random House, New York. Copyright 1956 by Sterling North.
Book, stiff boards, 5¾" x 9", (92) pp., n. i. Published by Zeenat Printing Works, Dacca. Printed in the Bengali language.

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Book, stiff boards with cloth backstrip, 5" x 7¼", (132) pp., fr., n. i. Published by Gandiva Sahitya Mandir, Surat in the Gujarati language.

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Book, flexible boards, 5" x 7¼", 266 pp., n. i. Published by Sahitya Miaayam Press/Kaloor/Ernakalam/(S. India). Printed in the Malayalam language.

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**NORTH, STERLING** **1959-235**
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Book, flexible boards, 4¾" x 7½", (112) pp., n. i. Published by Narayan Puranik, Kailas, Prakashan, Bombay in the Marathi language.

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(Translation): Abraham Lincoln: Log Cabin to White House. Copyright, 1959 by Sterling North/Sri Ranga Printing Works (Power Printers), Visakha.
Book, flexible boards, 5" x 7", 148 pp., illus. Printed in the Telugu language.

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Abe Lincoln/Frontier Boy/by Augusta Stevenson/ (device)/the new Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc./. . ./ Publishers. Indianapolis. New York.
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